

### **PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE**

In this seminar, we will explore various concerns of contemporary feminist theory. The course is introductory in the sense that it covers a large number of topics without exploring any with sufficient care. At the same time, however, the course is advanced in the sense that much of the assigned reading is theoretically sophisticated and so demands very close attention.

In our opening session, we will discuss several questions about the forms of pedagogy appropriate to a course on feminist theories. Following that, we will look at representative texts from five different approaches to this enterprise. This overview is intended to offer you a sample of the forms feminist theory presently assumes; it is not an all-inclusive set. Also, note that there is substantial overlap between and exchange among these various forms; their boundaries are not nearly as neat as my labels appear to suggest.

We will then turn to more specific issues of feminism and gender relations. Somewhat arbitrarily, I have organized this section of the course in a way such that we begin with issues that lean toward the personal (e.g., embodiment) and gradually approach those that lean more toward the explicitly political (e.g., the state). Please keep in mind, though, that there is no neat line dividing the personal from the political, and that the question of where and how to draw that line is itself one of the more important questions confronting feminist theory.

In the closing session, it is my hope that we will explore a single question: whither feminism now?

### **CLASS SESSIONS**

There will be no formal lectures in this course. All class time will be devoted to student presentations and discussions of assigned texts. Responsibility for making this course work rests primarily (but not exclusively) with you. This means that throughout the semester, you must do the assigned reading before coming to class, and you must come to class prepared to discuss that reading critically, imaginatively, and insightfully. If you are not willing to make this commitment, please reconsider your decision to take this course.

Classes scheduled between September 3 and September 19 will be conducted as loosely-structured discussions. In these sessions, our aim will be to explore the defining features of five approaches to feminist theory, and to ask what distinguishes each from the others. It is my hope that these sessions will provide everyone in the class with some measure of common ground, ground that will be presupposed when we begin our investigation of more specific topics.

Student presentations will begin on September 24 and continue through the end of the semester. Each student will be responsible for participating in two presentations, and each presentation will be offered by several students whose fates have been joined together by lot. Each group scheduled for a Monday presentation should meet with the course assistant on the preceding Sunday at 6:00 p.m. (place to be arranged). Each group scheduled for a Wednesday presentation should meet with Liz on the preceding Tuesday at 6 p.m.. The purpose of these sessions is to prepare your group for its upcoming presentation. **You must complete all of the assigned reading before you meet as a group.** During these sessions, you should determine which readings you intend to focus on in your presentation, how you wish to present, compare, and criticize their arguments, how you intend to divide the labor between the members of your group, etc.

In requesting your participation in these sessions, I am asking each of you to commit to a total of approximately three hours over and above the regularly-scheduled class meeting times. Sometime within the next week or so, find out whether those in the two groups of which you are a member can in fact meet at the times indicated here. If not, identify an alternative time and clear that time with Liz. Liz, incidentally, will not be involved in any of the grading for this course. Her role is to supplement rather than to replace the instructor. Toward this end, she also will be available, by appointment, for meetings with individual students.

No matter how you elect to proceed in your presentations, you are expected to incorporate in some fashion the questions that appear after each of the articles listed on the relevant date in the syllabus (or at least those articles that you intend to concentrate on). These questions are intended to insure that the basic argument of any given article is elaborated in class before we turn to the more interesting tasks of criticism and comparison. As

such, they constitute a starting point rather than a terminus for your presentations; you should go well beyond them in any given session.

The precise form of each presentation, which is to last the entire class period, is up to you. However, in some way, each should take up and attempt to answer the following three questions:

- 1) What, in light of the questions in the syllabus, do you think is the **central argument** advanced by each of the texts under consideration? You needn't discuss (although you must read) everything assigned for any given session, but you may do so if you are so inclined. If you're having trouble understanding the text(s) you have chosen to consider, your presentation offers an opportunity to ask for help from other members of the class. If you and your partner(s) disagree on what the reading(s) are all about, this is the time to get that disagreement out on the table;
- 2) How does a consideration of one or more of the readings previously completed for this course inform your understanding of the material presently under consideration? Here, I want you to engage in an explicitly **comparative inquiry**. Do any of the essays previously read complement, supplement, contradict, and/or challenge the text(s) now being discussed? Do any of the essays presently under consideration fit within one or more of the five "schools" we explored at the beginning of the semester?; and
- 3) What **criticisms** might be directed against the reading(s) at hand? (Obviously, you may use your answer to the second question as a way of working into the third.) What I want you to do here is to ask what limitations, flaws, contradictions, etc. you find in the reading(s) under consideration. You may not agree with your partner(s) as to the nature of these difficulties. Once again, your presentation offers an opportunity to get those difficulties out on the table.

How you choose to work your way through these three tasks is up to you. Regardless of how you choose to structure your presentation, **I do require that you do two things:** 1) As a group, you must prepare and bring to class a sufficient number of copies of a one page document outlining the principal points, issues, and/or questions you intend to discuss in your presentation; and 2) As a group, you must pause at several points in your presentation in order to ask whether others in the class have questions or wish to contest points made thus far. Better still, see if you can get the other members of the class involved in a sustained discussion of the assigned readings. That is a difficult task, one that requires prior development of an interrelated set of questions, along with references to specific textual passages that you think helpful in addressing those questions. Remember that you have eighty minutes to fill, so you needn't rush.

I encourage you to think as imaginatively as possible about the form of your presentations. Do not hesitate to experiment with unconventional strategies if you think them appropriate. In recent years, for example, students have used several of Madonna's videos in order to illustrate points they wished to make about the readings on this topic. Others engaged in cross-dressing in order to illustrate the idea that the constitution of gender identity is a sort of performance. If you have doubts about what you are planning, speak to me. Whatever you do, do it well.

In the unlikely event that you finish working your way through your group presentation before class is over, you should be prepared to lead a discussion on items of assigned reading you did not consider. That means that at the very least you should come prepared with a handful of questions to pose to the class on those readings.

During the presentations, Liz and I will raise questions, clarify unresolved issues (if we can), and advance criticisms. We will assume a more active role when and if we sense that you, as a group, are having difficulty either making sense of the assigned readings or are struggling to convey your points to the rest of the class. Hopefully, most of these problems will have been eliminated via your preparatory session(s).

Finally, I will set up a listserv for those enrolled in this course. While I mean this to be a general medium of communication for whatever matters of common concern emerge over the course of the semester, this device may be of special use to those preparing presentations for specific class sessions. Are there questions you want class members to consider before coming to class? Are there tasks you want to assign them before class? For such purposes, please feel free to make use of this medium.

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

### *Longer Papers*

By Friday noon of the week following the Monday or Wednesday when you do either of your two oral presentations, you should submit a paper dealing with some issue posed by the readings discussed in your presentation. While your paper should make explicit reference to one or more of the readings discussed in your presentation, it need not be narrowly tied to the assigned texts. Please feel free to make reference to other readings assigned for this course, to events at Whitman and beyond, and to whatever other materials you think appropriate. One copy of your paper should be placed in my Maxey mailbox, **and another should be sent to each of your presentation partner(s) via campus mail.** Each paper should be not less than 7 pages in length. Feel free to discuss your paper topics with me and/or with your partners during the week between presentation and submission.

### *Shorter Papers*

In addition to these two longer papers, on either Monday or Wednesday of the semester's thirteen weeks (as these are numbered in the schedule of reading assignments), at the beginning of class you must submit a short paper (not less than one page) on the assigned readings. I recognize that each of you is likely to be overloaded with work at various points in the semester. Hence, each student is permitted to select five weeks when she or he will not submit a paper. Effectively, this means that every student will submit eight such papers over the course of the semester. (Do note that during weeks 6 and 11 Wednesday is the only possible day for submitting a paper.) **Papers not submitted at the beginning of class will not be accepted at a later time.**

In these papers, I want you to respond to **at least two** of the readings assigned for that session. You may write separately on the readings you have selected; or, better still, you may consider them together. At the top of each page, please identify the readings you have chosen to address.

Just what you do in these short papers, in terms of form as well as content, is up to you. For some of the more difficult readings, perhaps the best you can do is to restate, as best you can, what you take to be an author's basic argument. For others, you may wish to begin to formulate a criticism or to offer a comparison with other texts. Alternatively, you may wish to relate one or more of the readings to contemporary issues in the news. Or, finally, you may wish to ask about the relevance of one or more of the readings for the way you live your own life. These writings are not to be thrown together at the last minute. They are to be carefully considered responses to the assigned readings.

When I read your longer papers, I will look for evidence of your ability to write elegant prose, to develop sophisticated arguments, to anticipate and then respond to criticisms of your arguments, to organize your thoughts coherently, etc. What I am looking for in these shorter submissions is a bit harder to define. What I hope to find is some indication that you are keeping up with and struggling to make sense of the readings; that you are trying to think about this course as a unified whole rather than as a sequence of unrelated topics; and, most intangibly, that you are making a sustained commitment to your own education in feminist theory. Toward that end, rather than provide extensive critical comments on the form and content of these papers, my evaluation will consist of a question or two aimed at provoking additional thought on your part. If you find that these questions leave you unclear as to why you received the grade you did on any given paper, please schedule an appointment with me. Although I make no promises, I will make every effort to return these short papers at the class period following their date of submission.

If you do not submit the required number of short papers, each failure to submit will be calculated as an "F" when it comes time to determine this portion of your final grade.

### *Final Exercise*

For your final examination, I want you to synthesize the materials we have looked at over the course of the semester. Toward that end, at the beginning of our last class meeting (December 5), each of you should submit **in writing** a single good question concerning some aspect of feminist theory and/or feminist politics. That question should be broad enough to enable you to make reference to a significant portion of the materials we have looked at this semester. However, that question should not be so abstract as to be vacuous. (Look at the final paragraph of Wendy Brown's "Consciousness Razing" for examples of what I take to be good questions. Don't adopt one of her questions, but do consider them as possible models in formulating your own.) It is vital that your submission be posed in the form of a question as opposed to that of a statement. Also, your question should not emerge directly out of the readings you considered in either of your presentations. At our last class meeting, I will ask a number of you to indicate the question you intend to explore in your final exercise. Those who are not called on for this

purpose will be given an opportunity to propose a tentative question, should they wish to do so.

By 4PM on Wednesday, December 12, each of you should submit a paper that answers the question you prepared for our last class meeting. With the exception of students who do a presentation on readings assigned after Thanksgiving break, no final papers will be accepted after that time. Those who do presentations on November 26, November 28, or December 3 may submit either their second long paper or their final exercise at any time prior to noon on Monday, December 17.

Your final paper should begin with an express statement of the question you intend to explore. In the process of working through that exploration, you should make clear: a) why you think your question is important; b) what general issues you are trying to get at in posing this question; c) what texts you will use in answering your question; and d) how exactly your question enables you to draw together some of the central themes of the course, considered as a whole. At the end of your argument, you should offer some sort of a conclusion; and, in some way, that conclusion should make clear to me the specifically political import of your argument. I have no objection if your conclusion takes the form of another question as long as that question emerges out of the argument you have just presented and proves considerably more profound than the question with which you began.

This final paper, which should be not less than seven pages, should show me what you have learned over the course of the semester. Specifically, it should demonstrate that you understand several of the basic "schools" of feminism we explored at the beginning of the course. It should show me that you understand the logic of the course structure, i.e., its move from more personal issues (e.g., embodiment) to those more public (e.g., the state). It should show me that you can employ some of the more abstract concepts we have come to employ over the course of the semester (e.g., objectification, essentialism, rights, liberalism, standpoint theory, compulsory heterosexuality, etc.). And, finally, it should show me that you can formulate specific examples to illustrate your understanding of these more general concepts.

### GRADING

A student must complete the two longer papers, as well as the final exercise, in order to pass the course. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the course. Final grades will be calculated on the following basis:

First long paper	25%
Second long paper	25%
Final exercise	25%
Short papers (collectively)	25%

In determining final grades, I will also take into account each student's overall contribution to the vitality of the seminar. Except under exceptional circumstances (e.g., persistent non-attendance), I will not give you a final grade that is lower than what your written work warrants. I will, however, feel free to give you a higher grade, should there I think there is good reason to do so.

You should interpret the grades you receive on papers in the following terms:

An "A" or "A-" will be given to papers that are clearly superior in form as well as content. In terms of form, such papers will 1) contain virtually no typographical errors; 2) exhibit elegant as well as clear prose; 3) include virtually no mistakes of grammar or punctuation (e.g., run-on or incomplete sentences; misplaced commas; misused semi-colons, apostrophes, etc.); 4) furnish adequate citations for all quotations; 5) be well-organized, with a coherent introduction as well as a conclusion that does more than merely summarize what has already been said; etc.

In terms of content, such papers will 1) indicate a thorough and careful reading of one or more of the assigned texts; 2) prove unusually sophisticated in their grasp of the subtleties of the texts under consideration; 3) demonstrate an ability to go beyond what we have covered in class; 4) exhibit an imaginative capacity to draw connections between nonobvious points; etc.

I am always delighted to return a paper with some form of an "A" affixed. However, I also believe that this grade should be awarded only when it is clearly merited. Because form is at least as important as content in the construction of a paper, no matter how original and sophisticated, I will not give any sort of an "A" to either a sloppy paper or a paper whose prose fails to measure up to the quality of its ideas.

Some form of a "B" will be given to papers that indicate an adequate grasp of the text in question, a competent ability to develop a coherent argument, and a capacity to write decent prose. Such papers are average in

the sense that they represent what I think most Whitman students are capable of producing. As such, these papers do not stand out from the crowd in the way "A" papers do. Some form of a "B" will also be given to papers that are either unusually strong in content but somewhat weaker in form, or vice versa. Obviously, a "B+" will go to papers that are better than the majority and that demonstrate at least the potential to be truly excellent. A "B-" will go to papers, which, although coherently-argued and decently-composed, do not go much beyond a solid understanding of the text(s) under consideration. Grades in the "B+" to "B-" range should be read as expressions of my sense that you are doing an acceptable job of assimilating the assigned material.

Some form of a "C" will go to papers that I find seriously flawed in one way or another. I will give you some form of a "C" 1) if the quality of your writing is significantly impeding your ability to express your thoughts clearly; 2) if, when I complete your paper, I still cannot identify your central argument; 3) if your paper fails to go beyond a bare summary of the assigned reading; 4) if your paper fails to provide the evidence and argumentation necessary to articulate and defend your basic claims; and/or 4) if your paper is poorly organized--e.g., if it appears to jump from topic to topic without rhyme or reason. Consider any form of a "C" an indication that your work is not what it should be.

Any grade lower than a "C-" is, in my book, an indication that the paper in question is unacceptable for one reason or another. Consider such a grade an exhortation to meet with me as soon as possible.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### INTRODUCTION: DOING THEORY

8/29

**bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice"**

**In Teaching to Transgress (New York: Routledge, 1994): 59-75**

1. What is bell hooks' understanding of the most productive relationship between theory and practice?
2. How is race problematically implicated in the production of feminist theory?
3. On what grounds does hooks reject the anti-intellectualism that often generates the claim that "theory is useless"?

**Wendy Brown, "Where is the Sex in Political Theory?"**

**Women & Politics 7 (1987): 3-23**

1. Look at the title to Brown's article: What's the answer to the question she poses there?
2. In what ways specifically do you see women in the history of political theory identified as creatures of their sex?
3. If women historically have been defined as creatures of their sexuality, then shouldn't feminism aim to deny, to break, this equation? How does Brown answer this question?

### THE POLITICS OF PEDAGOGY

Week 1

9/3

**JoAnne Myers and Joan Tronto, "Truth" and Advocacy: A Feminist Perspective"**

**PS: Political Science & Politics: 31 (1998): 808-810**

1. How might you make the argument that courses on feminist politics are exercises in political advocacy that have no place at a liberal arts college? On what grounds do Myers and Tronto reject that argument? More generally, what is the purpose of a course dealing with feminist theories? Is that purpose exclusively educational, or does it have a political dimension as well?
2. What, according to Myers and Tronto, is distinctive about feminist as opposed to more traditional forms of pedagogy?

**R.W. Connell, "Gender Politics for Men"**

**In Feminism and Men, S. Schacht and D. Ewing, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1998): 225-36**

1. Why is it, according to Connell, that few men have come to identify themselves as feminists?
2. What exactly does Connell mean to recommend when he urges that we "re-compose" the elements of gender, including its embodied dimensions? What might this look like in concrete terms?
3. Why does Connell oppose the formation of a "men's movement" analogous to the feminist movement?

**Iris Marion Young, "Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics"**

**In Throwing Like a Girl (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): 73-91**

1. If you are a humanist feminist, to use Young's label, what are some of the things you believe? What criticisms might a gynocentric feminist level against your beliefs?
2. If you are a gynocentric feminist, what are some of the things you believe? What criticisms might a liberal feminist level against your beliefs?
3. If you were required to put yourself into one of these two camps as opposed to the other, where would you place yourself at this point in time? Why?

## FIVE APPROACHES TO FEMINIST THEORY

9/5

### **Liberal Feminism**

**Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "1848 Declaration of Sentiments"**  
**In Joan Hoff, Law, Gender & Injustice (New York: New York University Press, 1991): 383-87**

1. Why is Stanton so concerned about women's inability to consent to the laws by which they are governed? If women cannot so consent, what follows in her mind with respect to the law's claim to legitimacy?
2. When Stanton argues that women are neither free nor equal, what conceptions of freedom and equality does she presuppose?
3. Do you get a sense of what Stanton's utopia might look like? Would it involve the abolition of marriage as an institution? The abolition of capitalism? Abolition of the liberal state?

**J.S. Mill, The Subjection of Women, Ch. 1**  
**In On Liberty, Stefan Collini, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 119-45**

1. Mill argues that in his day and age most persons will find an argument on behalf of the rights of women literally incredible. Why?
2. What, according to Mill, is the original cause or source of women's enslavement, and why have women not yet rebelled against their condition?
3. On what grounds does Mill condemn the enslavement of women, and what does this argument tell you about his vision of a desirable future? What would the condition of women be in Mill's utopia?

**Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy"**  
**In The Disorder of Women (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989): 118-39**

1. On Pateman's account, how has liberalism traditionally understood the relationship between public and private spheres? What goes on in each of these domains, and what is the relationship of each to the other?
2. Why does Pateman find liberalism fundamentally hypocritical? That is, in what way has liberalism betrayed its own ideals?
3. Is Pateman a liberal? Or is she arguing for a wholesale rejection of liberalism? Or is she arguing that liberalism, taken seriously, subverts itself and so becomes something other than liberalism?

Week 2

9/10

### **Socialist Feminism**

**Friedrich Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, selection**  
**In Feminist Philosophies, J. Kourany, J. Sterba, and R. Tong, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1992): 331-42**

1. How, according to Engels, were families originally organized, and what stages does the family evolve through on its way to contemporary monogamy?
2. How, according to Engels, was the original power of women broken? What development, in other words, accounts for the emergence of patriarchal power?
3. If Engel's account of the emergence of the modern family is correct, then how should you consider the popular contemporary representation of marriage, i.e., as a bond between two people who are in love with one another? Correlatively, how should you view contemporary marriage laws that represent marriage as a contract freely entered into by two equal parties?

**Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism"**  
**In Feminist Philosophies, J. Kourany, J. Sterba, and R. Tong, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1992):**

**343-55**

1. Why exactly is Hartmann unhappy about attempts to wed Marxism and feminism?
2. What, according to Hartmann, is the "material foundation" of patriarchy?
3. Do all men share the same interests in reproducing patriarchy? If not, along what lines are their interests divided?

**Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint"**

**In Discovering Reality, Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka, eds. (Boston: D. Reidel, 1983): 283-310**

1. Hartsock claims that her aim is to articulate the theoretical foundations of a distinctively "feminist standpoint." What exactly is a standpoint?
2. What are some of the distinctive features of women's existence, according to Hartsock, and how are they to be elaborated as a distinctive feminist standpoint?
3. What, on Hartsock's account, is the relationship between peculiarly masculine epistemology and masculine aggression and destructiveness?

9/12

**Ecofeminism**

**Ynestra King, "Healing the Wounds"**

**In Reweaving the World, Irene Diamond and Gloria Orenstein, eds. (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990): 106-21**

1. What, according to King, is the distinction between liberal and socialist feminism, and what error is common to both?
2. What, according to King, is the distinction between radical rationalist and radical cultural feminism, and what is the distinctive error of each?
3. What understanding of the relationship between nature and culture does King offer, and what political commitments follow from an embrace of the relationship?

**Nöel Sturgeon, "The Nature of Race"**

**In Ecofeminism, Karen Warren, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997): 260-78**

1. What are the five ways, according to Sturgeon, that ecofeminists characteristically theorize the relationship between women and nature? In what ways do these representations cohere or conflict with one another?
2. How does the issue of race explain why, according to Sturgeon, the WomanEarth Feminist Peace Institute collapsed in 1990?
3. How, according to Sturgeon, does much ecofeminist literature effectively silence the voices of Native American women while simultaneously idealizing them?

**Carol Adams, "The Feminist Traffic in Animals"**

**In Ecofeminism, Greta Gaard, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993): 195-217**

1. Using the ideas set forth by Adams, make the best case you can on behalf of vegetarianism. Begin by offering a critique of the term "meat," and then criticize the claim that it is "natural" for human beings to eat meat.
2. In what sense does the discourse of meat "depoliticize" the act of consuming dead animals?
3. If you were to defend your choice to eat meat by arguing that this is a private or personal matter, how will Adams respond?

Week 3  
9/17

**Psychoanalytic Feminism**

**Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality"**  
**In Feminist Philosophies, J. Kourany, J. Sterba, and R. Tong, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1992):**  
**309-22**

According to Chodorow, how do girls become girls? That is, how do female babies come to acquire a distinctively gendered identity?

2. What problems typically arise for girls as a result of this process of gendered identity formation?
3. What kind of prescription for change emerges from a psychoanalytic analysis? If you agree with Flax and Chodorow, i.e., if you accept a psychoanalytic framework of analysis, how will you go about dismantling patriarchy?

**Jane Flax, "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious"**  
**In Discovering Reality, Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka, eds. (Boston: D. Reidel, 1983): 245-81**

1. According to Flax, how do boys become boys? That is to say, how do male babies come to acquire a distinctively gendered identity?
2. How does Flax use this account of identity formation in boys to make sense of some of the key figures in the history of Western political theory? Can you recapitulate her analysis of any one of the specific figures she explores?
3. If I were to contend that Western philosophy is defined by various dualisms--e.g., mind/body, reason/feeling, theory/practice--what would that claim mean, and how would Flax offer a psychoanalytic reading of these dualisms?

**Elizabeth Spelman, "Gender in the Context of Race and Class"**  
**In Feminist Philosophies, J. Kourany, J. Sterba, and R. Tong, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1992):**  
**322-30**

1. What's the heart of Spelman's critique of Chodorow's psychoanalytic feminism?
2. How does Spelman try to persuade you that it is a mistake to consider the formation of gender identity apart from the formation of racial and class identity? How does she try to nail down her point by considering the relations between black men and white women?
3. Read the four questions Spelman poses on pp. 328-29. How would you answer each of them?

9/19

## Postmodern Feminism

**Jane Flax, "The End of Innocence"**  
**In Feminists Theorize the Political, Judith Butler and Joan Scott, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1992):**  
**445-63**

1. What does Flax mean by the title of this article?
2. Flax claims that liberalism, Marxism, and empirical social science all participate in the Enlightenment dream of "innocent knowledge." Can you explain how each does so as well as what is wrong with the dream that each recapitulates?
3. What should we do once, with Flax, we have recognized that there is no such thing as innocent knowledge, no such thing as knowledge that is separate from power and so from politics? What will a distinctively postmodern discourse of politics sound like?

**Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"**  
**Theatre Journal 49 (1989): 519-31**

1. In order to contest our commonsensical belief in stable gender identities, Butler relies very heavily on metaphors drawn from the theater. Why? What do these metaphors suggest about her understanding of gender identity?
2. Butler wants to claim that her argument renders the very term "women," as in the claim that "feminism is all about liberating women," problematic. How so, and what implications follow for our understanding of the purpose and, indeed, the very possibility of feminism?
3. Do you have a sense of what sort of political project might follow from Butler's analysis? Why, more

specifically, is she so intrigued by the drag queen?

**Susan Bordo, "Postmodern Subjects, Postmodern Bodies, Postmodern Resistance"  
In Unbearable Weight (Berkeley: University of California, 1993): 277-300**

1. How does Bordo evaluate Butler's use of metaphors drawn from the theater in order to think about the constitution of gender identity? More specifically, why does she walk you through an analysis of the Reebok ads at the end of her essay? What's her point, and how is that point a criticism of Butler?
2. Why does Bordo criticize the postmodern "inclination to emphasize and celebrate resistance, the creative agency of individuals, and the instabilities of current power-relations rather than their recuperative tendencies"?
3. How might Butler respond to Bordo's criticisms?

**THE POLITIC BODY/THE BODY POLITIC**

Week 4  
9/24

**Embodiment**

**Iris Marion Young, "Breasted Experience"  
In Throwing Like a Girl (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): 189-209**

1. What does Young mean when she claims that women's breasts are "fetishized" objects in contemporary Western culture?
2. Why are nursing breasts problematic from the perspective of a culture that seeks to rigidly separate motherhood from sexuality?
3. What might the "breasted experience" be like if it were liberated from the male gaze?

**Camille Paglia, "Sex and Violence, or Nature and Art"  
In Sexual Personae (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990): 1-39**

1. What conception of nature does Paglia entertain, and what is the relationship between nature and culture?
2. Where does sex fit within Paglia's understanding of the relationship between nature and culture, and what does this understanding of sex imply for the way she thinks about the relationship between women and men?
3. What are the implications of Paglia's argument for our understanding of feminism? What is the principal error, according to Paglia, of contemporary feminism?

**Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One"  
In New French Feminisms, Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds. (New York: Random House, 1988): 99-106**

1. Irigaray's title, "The Sex Which Is Not One," is intended as a pun. What's the joke?
2. How does Irigaray, in contrast to Freud, think about women's sexuality and sexual organs?
3. Irigaray seems to want to claim that women, if they are attuned to the plural character of their sexuality, will speak a language quite unlike that spoken by men. What are some of the distinguishing features of language that is true to women's sexuality?

9/26

**Disordered Embodiment**

**Kathryn Pauly Morgan, "Women and the Knife"  
Hypatia 6 (1991): 25-53**

1. Why, according to Morgan, are ever more women undergoing cosmetic surgery?

2. What does Morgan appropriate from the work of Michel Foucault, and how does that appropriation inform her discussion of “the three paradoxes of choice”?
3. What exactly does Morgan mean to recommend when she urges women to counter the “colonization” of their bodies by adopting “the response of refusal” and/or “the response of appropriation”?

**Susan Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa"**

**In Feminism & Foucault, Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988): 87-117**

1. Is anorexia, according to Bordo, a disease?
2. What does Bordo mean by the phrase "axes of continuity"? Can you explain how each axis works?
3. State the critique of contemporary culture that is implicit in Bordo's reading of anorexia.

**Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?"**

**In Feminism/Postmodernism, Linda Nicholson, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990): 157-75**

1. What point about women is Hartsock making through her discussion of Albert Memmi's analysis of the relationship between colonizer and the colonized?
2. What, according to Hartsock, are the principal deficiencies of Foucault's concept of power?
3. How and why might Hartsock criticize the appropriations of Foucault advanced by Susan Bordo and Kathryn Pauly Morgan?

## Week 5

10/1

### **Interpreting Cultural Icons**

*(At some point prior to this class session, if possible, all students should arrange to view several of Madonna's videos. At minimum, this should include "Justify My Love," "Like a Prayer," "Express Yourself, and "Open Your Heart.")*

**Cathy Schwichtenberg, "Madonna's Postmodern Feminism"**

**In The Madonna Connection, Cathy Schwichtenberg, ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press): 129-45**

1. Why does Schwichtenberg reject the claim that postmodernism is incompatible with and/or hostile to feminism?
2. What, according to Schwichtenberg, is involved in deconstructing the categories of sex and gender?
3. What conception of politics emerges out of Schwichtenberg's marriage of postmodernism and feminism?

**Susan Bordo, "Material Girl"**

**In The Madonna Connection, Cathy Schwichtenberg, ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press): 265-90**

1. What's wrong with postmodern celebrations of the plasticity of human and, more specifically, women's bodies, according to Bordo? What is neglected or hidden by such accounts?
2. What, according to Bordo, is the difference between the early as opposed to the late Madonna, and what is the cultural import of each?
3. In what sense, according to Bordo, is Madonna a pornographer and/or a pornographic object?

**bell hooks, "Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?"**

**Black Looks (Boston: South End Press, 1992): 157-64**

1. In what sense, according to hooks, is Madonna a racist?
2. In what sense, according to hooks, is Madonna heterosexual?
3. In what sense, according to hooks, is Madonna guilty of penis envy?

10/3

### **Sexual Identity**

**Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"**

**Blood, Bread, and Poetry (New York: Norton, 1986): 23-75**

1. Rich starts her essay with the statement of a puzzle regarding women's sexual preference, a puzzle

- which her argument will attempt to solve. What exactly is that puzzle?
2. What are some of the mechanisms through which compulsory heterosexuality is enforced?
  3. What exactly does Rich mean by the term "lesbianism?" More specifically, what does she mean by the phrase "lesbian continuum?"

**Monique Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman"**  
**Feminist Issues 2 (1981): 47-54**

1. How, according to Wittig, should we explain the fact that we typically think of women as a "natural group," i.e., a group of persons who belong together in virtue of certain essential and/or invariant features?
2. How do lesbians challenge this understanding of women as a natural group?
3. What sort of challenge does Wittig's argument, especially her rejection of the category of woman, pose to feminism?

**Shane Phelan, "(Be)coming Out: Lesbian Identity and Politics"**  
**Signs 18 (1993): 765-90**

1. Why does Phelan place parentheses around the word "becoming" in her title?
2. Why is Phelan unwilling to accept the claim that lesbianism expresses one's true, real, or essential identity?
3. What conception of politics emerges out of Phelan's argument about sexual identity?

Week 6

10/8

No class scheduled

10/10

**Pregnancy**

**Iris Marion Young, "Pregnant Embodiment"**  
**In *Throwing Like a Girl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): 160-74**

1. How does the experience of pregnancy challenge our conventional understanding of personal identity as well as our conventional understanding of the separation between self and world?
2. In what ways is the medicalization of pregnancy a source of alienation?
3. How would Young restructure the relationship between pregnant women and health care professionals?

**Rosalind Petchesky, "Fetal Images"**  
**Feminist Studies 13 (1987): 263-92**

1. What representation of the fetus is encouraged by many contemporary medical technologies?
2. What does Petchesky mean when she claims that the photographic image's power stems from its appearance of objectivity?
3. How does Petchesky explain the fact that, for many women, the reproductive technologies she discusses give them a sense of control and empowerment?

**Valerie Hartouni, "Containing Women"**  
**Technoculture, Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991): 27-56**

1. What do headlines like "Orphan Embryos Saved" and "Brain Dead Mother Has Her Baby" tell us about the state of reproductive politics in the late twentieth century?
2. According to Hartouni, what should we make of the fact that political discourse over the course of the past two decades has been so much preoccupied with, for example, female infertility and postabortion depression? What would it mean to offer a feminist analysis of this preoccupation?
3. Are the technologies analyzed by Hartouni politically repressive? If not, how are we to think about them?

**Sidney Callahan, "Abortion and the Sexual Agenda"  
Commonweal 113 (April 25, 1986): 232-38**

1. How does Callahan respond to standard pro-choice arguments in favor of legalized abortion and, more specifically, the claim that women have a right to control their own bodies?
2. Why does Callahan believe that a consistent feminist will not elect abortion as a response to an unwanted pregnancy?
3. Why does Callahan reject the claim that permissive abortion laws lead to greater freedom and equality for women? Why, more specifically, does she believe that women are better served by adherence to traditional moral norms?

**Wendy Brown, "Reproductive Freedom and the Right to Privacy"  
Families, Politics, and Public Policy, Irene Diamond, ed. (New York: Longman, 1983): 322-38**

1. Brown claims that this essay grows out her uneasiness with familiar pro-choice arguments. What is the source of her uneasiness?
2. Why does Brown believe that one must understand classical liberalism's division of the world into public and private spheres in order to understand what is problematic about contemporary pro-choice rhetoric? What will a Marxist approach reveal about the nature of that division?
3. Why does Brown think pro-choice feminists should stop using rights talk? What does she mean when she claims that we should talk instead about repoliticizing social relations and allegedly natural institutions?

**Naomi Wolf, "Our Bodies, Our Souls"  
The New Republic 213 (October 16, 1995): 26-35**

1. According to Wolf, what costs are generated by the employment of contemporary pro-choice rhetoric?
2. What is Wolf trying to get at with her use of terms like "soul," "atonement," and "redemption?"
3. If we were to adopt the sort of rhetoric Wolf recommends, how would we talk about abortion and its political status?

**Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking"  
Feminist Studies 6 (1980): 342-67**

1. What, according to Ruddick, are the three interests that govern maternal practice? Are these interests, according to Ruddick, biologically programmed or culturally constructed?
2. What does Ruddick mean when she suggests that maternal thinking must be transformed by feminism?
3. How would the incorporation of maternal thinking into the public sphere alter the way we conduct our politics?

**Jean Elshtain, "Antigone's Daughters"  
democracy 2 (1982): 48-59**

1. What is Elshtain's representation of the modern state, and how does that representation explain her hesitancy about liberal feminism?
2. Why does Elshtain seek to salvage the dignity of the private sphere, and what is the political significance of that effort?
3. How does the example of Antigone help Elshtain make her argument?

**Mary Dietz, "Citizenship With a Feminist Face"  
Political Theory 13 (1985): 19-37**

1. What are the key elements of Dietz's criticism of Elshtain's "social feminism?"

2. What conception of politics informs Dietz's criticism of Elshtain? What exactly is it that Dietz takes from Aristotle in thinking about the difference between family relations and political relations?
3. What does Dietz mean when, in her conclusion, she argues that models for feminist practice should be drawn not from the family, but from political organizations in which women have been predominant?

Week 8  
10/22

## Rape

**Kathleen Kirby, "Indecent Exposure"  
Indifferent Boundaries (New York: Guilford, 1996): 122-45**

1. What, according to Kirby, should a woman do when confronted by a man who won't give way on the street?
2. What does Kirby mean by her references to "the gaze?" More specifically, what are the two conceptions of the gaze she wishes to reject, and what understanding does she mean to put in their stead?
3. As a rule, women are not convicted for acts of indecent exposure. What does that tell us about conventional constructions of women's sexuality?

**Sharon Marcus, "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words"  
Feminists Theorize the Political, Judith Butler and Joan Scott, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1992):  
385-403**

1. What does Marcus mean when she claims that the act of rape takes shape as a cultural script?
2. How does one disrupt the cultural script of rape?
3. What understanding of rape is rejected by Marcus? More exactly, what does she mean when she claims that rape is not the "invasion of female inner space," but the "forced creation of female sexuality as a violated inner space?"

**Katie Roiphe, "Date Rape's Other Victim"  
New York Times (June 13, 1993): 26**

1. In what ways does date rape "hysteria," to use Roiphe's term, reinforce stereotypes about women?
2. In what sense does a preoccupation with date rape express a kind of cultural "nostalgia?"
3. How, according to Roiphe, do campus discussions of date rape trivialize the suffering of "real" rape victims?

10/24

## Difference

**bell hooks, "Racism and Feminism: The Issue of Accountability"  
In Ain't I a Woman (Boston: South End Press, 1981): 119-58**

1. Why does hooks believe that most feminist scholarship is racist?
2. Why does hooks find affirmative action programs designed to advance the cause of women problematic?
3. Why does hooks reject the claim that women's entry into the employment market is the road to emancipation?

**Gloria Anzaldua, "La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness"  
In Borderlands/La Frontera (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books): 77-91**

1. What is *mestiza* consciousness, and what does it mean to claim that the cultivation of such consciousness requires a tolerance for ambiguity?
2. How does Anzaldua understand the relationship of *mestiza* consciousness to feminism as well as to lesbianism?
3. What sort of politics, if any, emerges out of an embrace of *mestiza* consciousness?

**Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference"**

**In Justice and the Politics of Difference (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990): 117-41**

1. What is the ideal of universal citizenship to which Young refers in her title?
2. Why hasn't the achievement of universal citizenship generated real equality?
3. Young believes that the voices of those historically excluded from public discourse must now be included. What mechanisms does she propose in order to achieve that end?

Week 9

10/29

## **Pornography I**

**Susan Griffin, "Prologue," "Sacred Images," and "Eros"  
In Pornography and Silence (New York: Harper & Row, 1981): 1-81, 251-65**

1. In what sense, according to Griffin, does pornography reveal the enduring truth about Western culture and, more particularly, its understanding of the relationship between nature and culture?
2. Can you explain the psychological mechanisms Griffin invokes--specifically, those of projection and denial--in order to explain the content of conventional pornographic images?
3. What, according to Griffin, is the relationship between Christianity and pornography?

**Laura Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*"  
In Cultural Studies, L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, and P. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992): 373-91**

1. Why in a sense does Kipnis prefer *Hustler* to *Playboy*?
2. What does Kipnis mean when she suggests that feminist disgust with pornography concerns issues of class as well as gender?
3. According to Kipnis, what political message is implicit in the photomontage of the first Bush administration, as published in *Hustler*?

10/31

## **Pornography II**

**Catharine MacKinnon, "Pornography, Civil Rights and Speech"  
Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review 20 (1985): 1-70**

1. What does MacKinnon mean when she suggests that pornography is what it does, not what it represents? What, by the way, is it that pornography does?
2. What exactly are the provisions of MacKinnon's anti-pornography statute?
3. How does MacKinnon respond to the claim that her proposed statute violates the First Amendment's free speech clause?

**Lisa Duggan, "False Promises: Feminist Antipornography Legislation in the U.S."  
In Women Against Censorship, Varda Burstyn, ed. (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985): 130-151**

1. What are Duggan and her co-authors getting at with their Venn diagrams?
2. Why do Duggan and her co-authors believe that MacKinnon's statute may be used to restrict materials that are conducive to women's emancipation?
3. Duggan and her co-authors believe that MacKinnon's statute is a form of censorship. How do they justify this claim, and how will MacKinnon respond?

Week 10

11/5

## **Needs and Rights**

**John Hardwig, "Should Women Think in Terms of Rights?"  
In Ethics 94 (1984): 441-55**

1. Why, according to Hardwig, is it a mistake to extend rights talk to intimate relationships?
2. According to Hardwig, what vision of human nature is implicit in rights talk?
3. What sort of talk does Hardwig think is better suited to do justice to the distinctive features of intimate

relationships?

**Elizabeth Schneider, "The Dialectic of Rights and Politics"**  
**In Women, the State, and Welfare, Linda Gordon, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990): 226-49**

1. What criticisms, according to Schneider, are often directed against rights talk by proponents of critical legal theory?
2. What argument is implicit in Schneider's title, and how does that argument represent a counter to the claims advanced by critical legal theorists?
3. What does Schneider want us to learn from her account of the *Wanrow* case?

**Nancy Fraser, "Struggle Over Needs"**  
**In Women, the State, and Welfare, Linda Gordon, ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990): 199-225**

1. In what ways is "needs talk" a political struggle and, more specifically, a struggle over what counts as a legitimate political issue? How, in other words, has Western political discourse conventionally viewed claims framed in the language of needs?
2. How does liberalism conventionally understand the relationship between the family, the economy, and the state, and why does Fraser find that understanding inadequate?
3. Fraser offers an account of the differences between the way young white and African-American pregnant women respond to therapeutic intervention. What is the point of that story? How does it support her main argument?

11/7

**Visiting Author**

**Mary Hawkesworth, "Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth"**  
**Signs 14: (1989): 533-57**

1. What are the three models of knowledge Hawkesworth finds predominant in contemporary feminist theory, and how does she assess each?
2. What is involved in thinking of knowledge, to quote Hawkesworth, as a form of "human practice," and why does she think this conception avoids what she calls the psychological and functionalist deficiencies of other models?
3. On what grounds does Sharon Marcus, in "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words," criticize Hawkesworth and, in particular, her treatment of "postmodernist" interpretations of rape? How might Hawkesworth respond?

**Mary Hawkesworth, "A Constitutional Proposal"**  
**In Beyond Oppression (New York: Continuum, 1990): 171-97**

1. What does Hawkesworth mean when she claims that contemporary feminism is immobilized by the "futility of utopian visions" and the "frustration of liberal tokenism"?
2. What is useful and what is misguided about thinking of the collective situation of women on the analogy of race, class, and religion?
3. What exactly is Hawkesworth's proposal for "sex parity in public office," and how does she respond to various possible objections to this proposal?

**Mary Hawkesworth, "Confounding Gender"**  
**Signs 22 (1997): 649-85**

1. What, according to Hawkesworth, is the "natural attitude" toward gender?
2. How do the four works criticized by Hawkesworth serve to reinforce the "natural attitude" toward gender?
3. What does Hawkesworth mean when she recommends that our analysis of gender should remain confined to the question of "how" it operates instead of moving to the question of "why" it operates as it does?

Week 11

11/12

Mary Hawkesworth, Discussion with class

Mary Hawkesworth, Public lecture  
"The Semiotics of Premature Burial: Feminism in a Post-Modern Age"  
Olin 130, 7:30 p.m.

11/14

Exporting Feminism

Mary Daly, "Indian *Suttee*," and "African Genital Mutilation"  
In Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978): 107-133, 153-77

1. What does Daly mean when she claims that the practices she condemns are "sado-rituals," and what is their purpose?
2. How will Daly respond to the claim that her condemnation of these practices is racist in the sense that it takes for granted the universal validity of Western values?
3. In what ways is Western scholarship complicit in the perpetuation of "sado-rituals?"

Uma Narayan, "Restoring History and Politics to 'Third World Traditions'"  
In Dislocating Cultures (New York: Routledge, 1997): 43-80

1. Why does Narayan contend that Daly's analysis of the practice of *sati* is predicated on a "colonialist stance?"
2. What is wrong with Daly's understanding of "tradition," and in what sense is the very notion of "tradition" peculiarly modern?
3. How does Narayan's analysis of the immolation of Roop Kanwar complicate the distinction between a "good" and a "bad" *sati*, and what implications does that complication bear for the question of whether women can be said to "choose" self-immolation?

Isabelle Gunning, "Arrogant Perception, World-Traveling, and Multicultural Feminism"  
Columbia Human Rights Law Review 23 (1991-92): 189-248

1. What does Gunning mean by the phrase "arrogant perception," and what would it look like to engage in arrogant perception with respect to genital surgeries?
2. What does Gunning mean by "world-travelling," and how is it an antidote to arrogant perception?
3. What is the appropriate role of law, if any, in transforming the practice of genital surgeries?

Week 12

11/26

Technology

Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, Creatures of Prometheus, pp. 1-98  
(Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997)

1. What exactly is the "Cartesian paradigm of use," and what are its implications for the way we think about the relationship between gender and technology?
2. What is the dialectic of projection and reciprocation, and how will an adoption of this category alter the way we think about the relationship between gender and technology?
3. How, according to the author, is the relationship between Calvin and his hammer best understood?

11/28

Technology (continued)

Timothy Kaufman-Osborn, Creatures of Prometheus, pp. 159-83, 212-83  
(Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997)

1. How does the author seek to reformulate the body of feminist thought known as standpoint theory?
2. How, according to the author, should we think about the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his creature?
3. What, according to the author, is Grigori Medvedev unable to understand about the explosion at Chernobyl, and why is the narrator of Accident able to see more?

**Catharine MacKinnon, "Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory"**

**Signs 7: (1982): 227-56**

1. What is MacKinnon's account of the relationship between Marxism and feminism? What does she reject about conventional understandings of that relationship, and what does she want to retain from Marxism, if anything?
2. What method is peculiarly appropriate to feminism, according to MacKinnon?
3. When you apply MacKinnon's method, what do you discover about what it means--or rather, is--to be a woman?

**Catharine MacKinnon, "Marxism, Method and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence"**

**Signs 8: (1983): 635-58**

1. Why does MacKinnon reject the legal ideal of objectivity?
2. What, according to MacKinnon, is the best way to understand the act of rape, and what is wrong with the way most contemporary law makes sense of that act?
3. If rape law were to be reformed in light of MacKinnon's arguments, how specifically would it be changed?

**Wendy Brown, "Consciousness Razing"**

**The Nation (January 8/15, 1990): 61-64**

1. Can you summarize the crux of Brown's critique of MacKinnon, and especially her understanding of feminist method?

**Wendy Brown, "Finding the Man in the State"**

**Feminist Studies 18 (1992): 7-34**

1. Why, according to Brown, is the state an important topic for feminist analysis?
2. In what sense exactly is the state masculine, and what are the four dimensions of masculinist state power?
3. Why does Brown think it is a mistake for women to look to the state for protection from various evils--e.g., pornography and rape?

**(IN)CONCLUSION: WHITHER FEMINISM?**

12/5

**Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"**

**In Feminism/Postmodernism, Linda Nicholson, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1990): 190-233**

1. What does Haraway mean when she claims that her aim is to construct an "ironic political myth," and why is the cyborg the central figure of this myth?
2. Can you explain the nature and political import of the three "leaky distinctions" analyzed by Haraway in the first section of her essay?
3. How does Haraway characterize the political, social, and economic context that confronts feminism at the end of the century, and what does she mean when she responds to this context with a call for a politics of "fractured identities"?